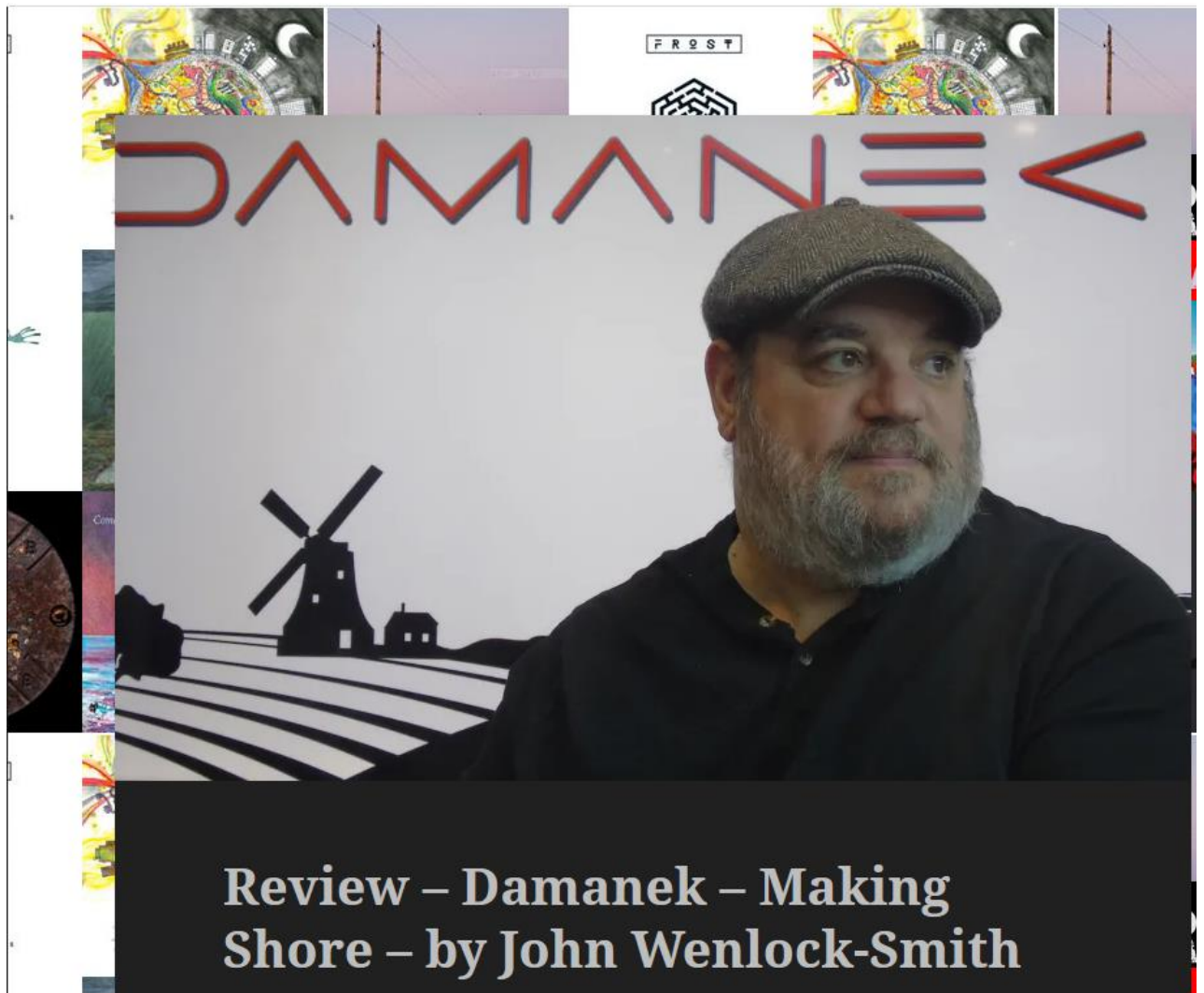
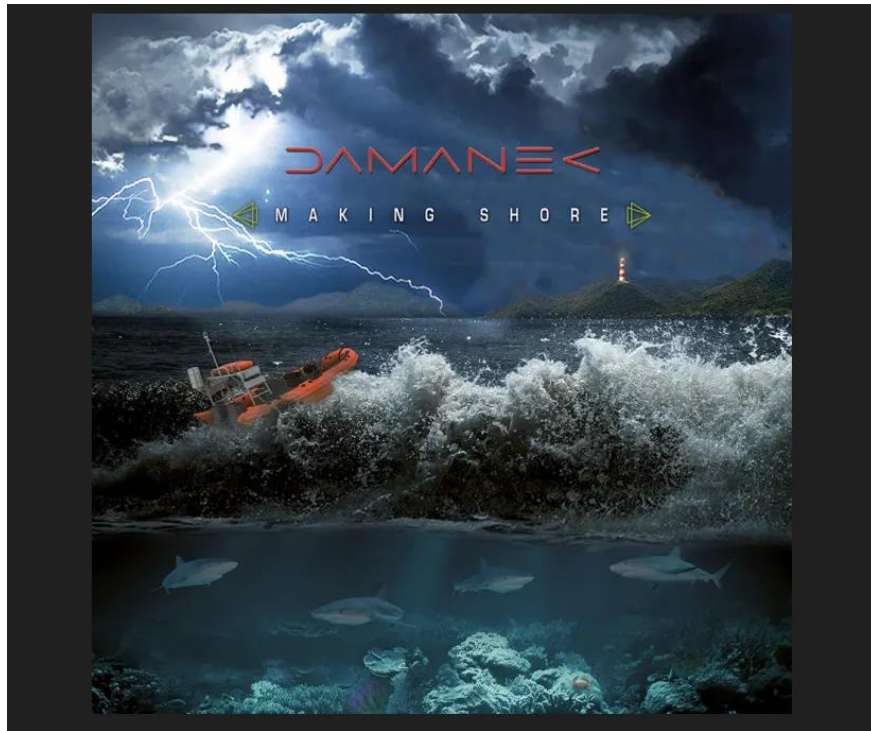


PROGRADAR – DAMANEK “MAKING SHORE” REVIEW




**Review – Damanek – Making
Shore – by John Wenlock-Smith**



'Making Shore' will lift your spirits from any post new year blues that you might be troubled with, for this album is simply glorious. Well, it's been a long time in its realisation and, finally, the third **DamaneK** album is nearly upon us. It will physically be released on the 13th of January 2023 and I can envisage big success for the band with this fantastic collection of songs, eight in total, in two distinct sections. Part one has seven songs of middling length and with various themes, part two is one thirty minute epic, consisting of five parts, which is an exploration of alternative realities and time travel.

The band consists of a core unit of **Guy Manning** (lots of keys, lots of acoustic instruments (guitar, mandolin, bouzouki), percussion and vocals), **Marek Arnold** (saxophone, keyboard) along with **Sean Timms** (keyboards, vocals, percussion, mixing and production duties). They are aided by a veritable who's who of modern Neo-Prog. These include half of **Southern Empire**, that's **Cam Blokland** on guitar and **Brody Green** on drums, also present are **Ralf Dietsch** of **Cyril**, **Jonathan Barrett** (ex **The Tangent** bass player), **Riley Nixon-Burns** (trumpet) and **Linda Pirie** on flute and piccolo.




Together these folks make truly special and spacious music that has a familiar feel alongside new sounds and textures. The music is rich and lush with melody woven strongly throughout. It is an album that will draw you into its orbit and will give you a satisfying musical journey that will take you from **Mount Everest** through the **Great Barrier Reef**, an American heartland and finally on a journey into a world of memories, hopes and desires. All are to be discovered within its tracks so buckle up for the ride of the month if not the year, such is the strength and stature of this album.

The album's first track is *A Mountain Of Sky*, a song about that most famous of summits, Everest. The sound is very clever in that it captures and conveys Tibetan sounds and is very evocative of that area, the song has a driving beat and rhythm to it and is as epic as the mountain itself, with a strong chorus and some strong guitar lines woven within its running time. The soundscape is everything you could want from **Damanek** making this epic track a superb statement of intent and it bodes very well for the rest of the album. The ethnic feeling percussion, woven with the expressive sax work of **Marek Arnold**, is a joy to hear and means this song really has a swing and a groove to it, even the cod reggae section works well. There is so much to enjoy before the song ends on a graceful guitar break, simply a brilliant opening to the album, it's fabulous stuff. *Back2Back* is about how humanity has pushed the world

into a difficult situation regarding the climate of the earth and its repercussions for us. There are very thought provoking lyrics within this song and there is also a further fantastic guitar solo. *Noon Day Candles* is a plea for a fairer share for all and contrasts our scientific and technological achievements with our unwillingness and inability to feed the world's children. This is a very fine song and whilst its words are earnest and challenging the music is well balanced with the questions and pleas the song asks and raises.


This album is proving to be challenging in its subject matter and lyrics, never a bad thing in my opinion, it is good to have to think about these issues. *Americana* is a song about a fictitious American farm in the heartlands that is struggling with the demands of the present age, climate change and poverty. Farming is not easy as anyone who has watched **Clarkson's Farm** can attest, the song is short and direct.

There are then two songs of the sea interrupted by a song about dementia, *In Deep Blue (Sea Songs Pt.1)* is a very personal one for Guy as it is about his youngest son who, despite having Asperger's, decided whilst on holiday in Greece to go scuba diving. This song is Guy's musings on his bravery and determination to have a go at it. He managed to accomplish his goal and this made Guy very proud of his son's achievements.



Reflections On Copper is a more sobering song, focusing as it does on the increasing number of people who are being affected by, and living with, dementia. Dementia is a cruel illness and disease that can take many forms, I personally am affected by vascular dementia as the result of a stroke meaning my neural pathways have been damaged by the stroke and whilst that dementia is mild at the present time, it may not stay that way, only time will tell so the sentiments expressed are certainly relevant to my own life. *Crown of Thorns (Sea Songs Pt.2)* is about how the **Great Barrier Reef** is being affected and how, again, climate change is affecting the balance with an increase in the Crown Of Thorns starfish who normally eat that faster growing coral which gives slower growing species an opportunity to catch up. Climate change has affected this though as the coral eating starfish have increased in outbreak proportions. This song concludes the first half of the album

The second section is the multi part *Oculus*, split into an overture and four acts. This is a very interesting and somewhat difficult song to digest but is best heard as a complete track (about thirty minutes in total). The song is about alternate dimensions and realities. This is a most interesting concept and this piece reflects that curiosity in a very well balanced manner. It is also a cautionary tale in that we can hear a warning that we perhaps need to heed and to consider. Of the four acts *One* is the



scene setting, *Two* is the adventure, *Three* is the consequences of the action and, finally, *Four* is the redemption and return to normality. The song is epic and the story is illuminating and yet cautionary at the same time. The music in all acts is subtle and exciting and the piece ends with urgent horns and a dazzling guitar solo that bring it all together in a gracefully and satisfying manner with a well executed door slam to conclude proceedings.

This album has so much to commend it, great subject matter, challenging & thoughtful lyrics and superb & inspired playing. It certainly is a winner to these ears, a sublime, intelligent and articulate work of art, I urge, nae demand, you to pay attention and add it to your listening pleasure.

Released 13th January, 2023.

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